

**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SHREWSBURY, MASSACHUSETTS**

SPECIAL EDUCATION INFORMATION

The following enrollment data is included in this section:

- 1) Special Education Services: An Overview of Federal and State Requirements with Shrewsbury-specific Information
- 2) State-wide Spending Trend
- 3) Shrewsbury Spending Trend

Shrewsbury Public Schools

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Introduction:

Shrewsbury Public Schools has a comprehensive program for students with disabilities. The school system subscribes to the philosophy that all students can learn and that the purpose of special education is to minimize the impact of disability and maximize the opportunities for children with disabilities to have access to the general curriculum. There are programs for students at all grade levels from Pre-k through post high school.

The federal legislation governing special education, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA, was reauthorized in 2004. The changes in regulations as of this latest reauthorization, fully published in August of 2006, are in the process of becoming understood and implemented. The Massachusetts general law governing special education is 603 CMR, section 28.00 and it specifies many aspects of procedure related to special education that is also found in IDEA including definitions, administration and personnel, referral and evaluation, the IEP and Team process, transition services and options for dispute resolution.

It is the responsibility of the school district to provide every student with disabilities with a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) within the least restrictive environment (LRE).

Student Population:

There are currently 1001 students receiving special education services from the Shrewsbury Public Schools. This figure can be broken down in a number of ways.

- Placement 944 in district
 57 out of district
- Gender 672 boys
 329 girls
- Disability types (as designated in IDEA 2004):
 (see next page)

Disability	In district	Out of district	Total
Autism	50	8	58
Communication	247	0	247
Developmental delay	70	1	71
Emotional	22	11	33
Health impaired	61	6	67
Intellectual	27	0	27
Multiple disabilities	20	9	29
Neurological	28	4	32
Physical	12	0	12
Sensory/Hearing	6	1	7
Sensory/Visual	4	0	4
Specific learning disab.	396	17	414
TOTALS	944	57	1001

Currently, 16.7% of all students in Shrewsbury Public Schools are receiving special education services, which is the state average.

The largest number of students falls into the category of "specific learning disability." This is defined in the law as "a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia."

- Students by Primary Disability chart – This chart shows the percentages of students in Shrewsbury who are diagnosed with each primary type of disability as defined in the law. The chart was derived from Eutactics which is the administrative technology used by the special education department. see Appendix

Programs:

Shrewsbury Public Schools provides a variety of program options depending upon the severity of the child's disability, his/her individual needs and the IEP. The majority of students with special needs participate in the regular education program for much of their school day.

Elementary Learning Center or early Learning Center (ELC): This program is designed for children on the autism spectrum who need an intensive level of intervention and individual attention in order to access the curriculum.

Learning skills/academic support: Students are generally included in all academic classes and often receive specific instruction in the areas of reading, language arts/English and math. They also receive support for their other academic classes and receive instruction about their own learning styles and how to accommodate them in the classroom.

Intensive program: Children in the intensive special needs program are also included in regular education classes but there is a higher level of modification of the academic work and a greater emphasis on reading, language acquisition and basic math skills.

Life skills: At the secondary level, these programs are designed for students with intellectual disabilities who need functional life skills and pre-vocational training. At Oak MS, students have specific jobs and rotate through a variety of work experiences. Students at Sherwood MS work at the Coffee Café as part of their pre-vocational experience. The students are included in regular education classes with modifications and there is an emphasis on hands-on activities and real life experiences.

Employment training: At the high school, this program is aligned with the MA frameworks and modified according to student's individual learning needs. It provides students with a variety of work experiences both within the high school environment and the greater community. It also includes small structured, individualized classes for concrete learners with a vocational/real life curriculum and field trip experiences.

Staffing:

Due to the nature of special education, a variety of different types of professional and auxiliary staff are needed to service the students. In addition, the needs of the students vary as they age with the result that there are changes in the staffing configuration through the grades. Please see professional staff chart.

ELC coordinator: These professionals coordinate the school based programs for students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. They hire, train and supervise the children's one to one ABA (Applied behavioral Analysis) technicians who administer the individually designed programs. The ELC coordinators work closely with the speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists and school psychologist when designing programs. They also conduct clinics for parents to

help them adapt the methods being used in school to the home environment, which is critical to helping the children generalize the skills they are learning.

Speech and language pathologist: Communication skills are the fundamental building blocks for literacy and learning. Speech-language pathologists have the specialized knowledge and experience that's needed to identify communication disorders and provide the help that children need to build their language literacy skills. They provide classroom-based services, co-teach with classroom teachers and reading specialists, and work with students who are at risk for reading and learning difficulties and with children who are experiencing academic failure.

Occupational therapist: A child is usually referred to the OT by the teacher due to concerns surrounding fine motor development, postural stability, sensory processing skills, attention, motor planning, visual perceptual function, writing / drawing ability, or self-care skills. If there is weakness in any of these underlying skills, it may manifest as learning difficulties, attention or behavioral issues, or poor social-emotional functioning. It is the role of the OT to evaluate the presenting problem, determine the underlying cause for the student's difficulties and develop an appropriate intervention plan.

School psychologist: The school psychologists are responsible for assessing students who are initially referred to special education and re-evaluating students who are receiving services a minimum of every three years. At the elementary level, the school psychologists also serve as the Team chairs and are responsible for conducting Team meetings, overseeing the writing of IEP's and ensuring that the timelines, dictated through the law, are maintained. They also meet with individual and small groups of students to provide counseling services. When possible, the school psychologists at the middle school levels see individual students for counseling. Since there are no adjustment counselors at the high school, the school psychologists there provide both the evaluation and counseling services for all students.

Adjustment counselor: These professionals meet with individual and small groups of students to help them with school and home issues that may prevent the student from achieving his/her academic potential. The adjustment counselors interact regularly with teachers, parents, and administrators in an effort to help the students. They may also interact with representatives from DSS, DYS or probation.

Professional	Parker	Beal	Elem	SMS	Oak	SHS	SPS	Totals
Learning skills teacher	1	1	11	4	4	6		26
Intensive teacher		1	3	2	2			8
ELC coordinator	2	1	1					4
Life skills teacher				1	1	1		3
Employment specialist						1		1
Transition specialist						0.4		0.4
Intensive home teacher						0.6		0.6
Speech/lang path	2.8	1.4	4.4	1.6	1	0.4		11.6
Occupational Therapist								2.6
School psychologist	0.2			0.4	1	1.5		3.1
Adjustment counselor				2	2			4
School psych/Team chair		0.8	4.5					5.3
Dept director/Team chair				1	1	1		3
Out of district coord							0.6	0.6
Physical therapist								0.5
Director/Team chair	1							1
Speech asst.		0.2	0.4	1	1			2.6
COTA (OT asst)								2.4

Strengths:

- Clearly, the strength of the department is the staff. This is an exceptional group of veteran and new staff members who are highly qualified in education and expertise. They care deeply about their students and work hard to design individual programming to help each student maximize his/her potential.
- The ELC program services the majority of the children on the autistic spectrum very well. Without this program, many of these students would need to attend day school programs which would be prohibitively costly for the school district.
- The transition of children from Early Intervention to the public school upon age 3 is a strength of the school district. Transition activities include a home visit by the Director of Preschool Programs at age 2.6, a team evaluation process, a family visit to the school, a team meeting including early intervention staff, public school staff, and parents, and placement in a program by age three. The Director of Preschool programs also meets with UMass Early Intervention every 3 months to receive information about future referrals.

- SHS has been providing many of the transition services now mandated in the IDEA for many years.

Challenges:

- Access to the general curriculum, the goal of special education, is accomplished through including students in regular education classrooms. This is most effective when the regular and special education teachers have the time and opportunity to plan together for their students. It is least effective when this planning is done when the teachers encounter each other quickly in the hall or at the mailbox. Due to the current level of staffing and scheduling, common planning time is not occurring which prevents truly effective planning for inclusion.
- There is insufficient professional staff at several grade levels. There are too many students with disabilities for each teacher and, at certain levels, we are having difficulty maintaining compliance with the mandated student/staff ratios.
- The recent DOE Mid-cycle Coordinated Program Review is likely to cite SPS for inappropriate space for OT services at the elementary level.
- There is a need for programming for specific low incidence groups of students such as children with behavior disorders and students who are on the autism spectrum but do not fit the criteria for the life skills program.

Future initiatives:

- The Language Learning Program (LLP) is being designed for next year for students in grade five who have significant language issues. These students have average to above average intelligence; are two grade levels below in reading; cannot independently demonstrate knowledge across content areas; have weaknesses in organization of written language and orally presented material and require systematic phonetic reading instruction. It is the belief of the special education department that all students with specific learning disabilities, even those which are quite significant, can and should be educated within the system. The LLP would be the first step toward that goal. The plan is to expand this program to the elementary level in the 08-09 school year.
- The development of a more coordinated approach for students who are on the autism spectrum but may be able to “graduate” from the ELC program will be important in the future. Students may do well in grades 1 and 2 but begin to experience difficulty in grades 3 and 4 when the academics become more complex, more auditory and less likely to be based on classroom exploration centers. These students also have significant social issues that need to be addressed especially as they move to the middle school level.

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School Finance**Direct Special Education Expenditures as a Percentage of School Budgets, FY96 to FY05**

999 - state total all operating districts

999 - state total all operating districts

Last updated on 07/07/2006

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	-- In-District Instruction --		-- Out-of-District Tuition --		Combined	Total	Special
FY	Teaching	Other Instructional	Mass. Public Schools and Collaboratives	Mass Private and Out-of-State Schools	Special Ed Expenditures (A+B+C+D)	School Operating Budget	Education Percentage of Budget (E as % of F)
1996	486,840,476	104,104,685	82,895,144	150,881,771	824,722,076	5,227,135,082	15.80
1997	541,210,319	110,400,211	91,917,009	163,503,999	907,031,538	5,592,649,791	16.20
1998	588,313,727	120,165,376	95,693,738	179,960,667	984,133,508	6,012,310,840	16.40
1999	642,490,684	127,213,646	111,894,993	190,746,207	1,072,345,530	6,433,581,289	16.70
2000	699,992,114	133,074,054	126,149,649	203,534,142	1,162,749,959	6,891,623,126	16.90
2001	755,776,358	142,748,288	139,821,937	226,638,603	1,264,985,186	7,344,378,526	17.20
2002	802,046,196	146,387,933	158,371,947	258,771,002	1,365,577,078	7,850,826,080	17.40
2003	847,191,270	148,613,839	164,164,801	281,886,001	1,441,855,911	8,145,051,218	17.70
2004	876,740,473	165,047,123	182,197,630	324,852,156	1,548,837,382	8,329,867,356	18.60
2005	924,994,425	179,216,581	184,109,385	368,572,004	1,656,892,395	8,769,060,880	18.90

Notes and Definitions

Source: End of Year Pupil and Financial Report, Schedule 4 - Special Education Expenditures by Prototype.

Special Education Expenditures

- "Direct" special education expenditures include only those that can be related specifically to special education pupils.
- "Other instructional" includes supervisory, textbooks and instructional equipment, guidance, and psychological services.
- "Mass. Public Schools and Collaboratives" includes other public school districts, collaboratives, and charter schools.
- Thru FY03, "Mass. Private and Out-of-State Schools" includes only the local share of residential programs (50 percent of the cost was paid directly to those schools by the Commonwealth). Beginning in FY04, the 50 percent reimbursement was replaced by the circuit-breaker program, which reimburses the districts directly. The tuition shown in this column now represents 100 percent of the district cost.
- Spending from state "circuit breaker" funds is included. Otherwise, spending from grants, revolving funds, or other non-appropriated revenue sources (totalling less than 4 percent of total special ed spending statewide) is excluded.

Total School Expenditures

- Through FY03, "Total School Operating Budget" equals Chapter 70 actual "Net School Spending". Beginning in FY04, circuit-breaker revenues are added to the net school spending amount because the circuit-breaker program is included in the special education columns, but not in net school spending.
- Operating budget includes municipal indirect spending for schools but excludes capital expenditures and transportation.
- Other than circuitbreaker spending, operating budget does not include expenditures from grants, revolving funds, or other non-appropriated revenue sources.

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Massachusetts Department of Education

School Finance**Direct Special Education Expenditures as a Percentage of School Budgets, FY96 to FY05**

271 - SHREWSBURY

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Last updated on 07/07/2006

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	-- In-District Instruction --		-- Out-of-District Tuition --		Combined	Total	Special
FY	Teaching	Other Instructional	Mass. Public Schools and Collaboratives	Mass Private and Out-of-State Schools	Special Ed Expenditures (A+B+C+D)	School Operating Budget	Education Percentage of Budget (E as % of F)
1996	1,478,933	127,855	311,195	664,175	2,582,158	19,886,730	13.00
1997	1,147,740	463,012	320,804	663,212	2,594,768	21,144,462	12.30
1998	1,701,401	548,646	329,669	752,934	3,332,650	23,955,596	13.90
1999	2,084,127	648,691	326,805	762,848	3,822,471	26,109,234	14.60
2000	2,649,992	689,240	240,539	770,047	4,349,818	28,762,594	15.10
2001	2,698,520	783,422	227,632	571,190	4,280,764	31,199,717	13.70
2002	3,010,178	866,760	173,886	784,719	5,435,543	33,143,729	16.40
2003	3,359,492	1,127,412	231,026	897,974	5,615,904	36,101,586	15.60
2004	4,047,224	1,151,063	359,291	1,585,313	7,142,891	39,991,000	17.90
2005	4,653,632	1,210,379	248,700	2,035,770	8,148,481	44,057,313	18.50

Notes and Definitions

Source: End of Year Pupil and Financial Report, Schedule 4 - Special Education Expenditures by Prototype.

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